



Member Profile: Rep. Lamar Smith (R)

District: Texas-21

First Elected: 1986

With the Republicans poised to assume control of the House of Representatives for the 112th Congress, Rep. Lamar Smith is set to be the next chairman of the [House Judiciary Committee](#) which oversees all immigration issues. Smith is not a newcomer on the issue of immigration: in 1994 he capitalized on Republican enthusiasm and became the chief architect behind one of the most sweeping immigration laws: the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. He was also an original cosponsor of the Sensenbrenner bill ([H.R. 4437](#)) in 2005.

Described as a [lawmaker](#) who is “less interested in getting in the spotlight and more interested in driving immigrants out of the country,” Smith will undoubtedly use his leadership position to push through a restrictionist agenda which [has included](#) promoting Arizona-type immigration laws nationwide, implementing a mandatory employment verification program and revisiting the birthright citizenship guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. Here is a sampling of Smith’s more recent proposals on immigration:

- **Arizona-Style Immigration Enforcement:** Earlier this year, Smith sponsored [H. Res. 1384](#), a bill “expressing the sense of the House of Representatives” that local governments, and State and local police “have the inherent authority of a sovereign entity” to enforce federal immigration laws. The legislation seeks to clarify Congress’ intent on the inherent authority of states and localities to regulate immigration. One of its purposes is to invalidate arguments challenging the AZ law as preempted by federal law.
- **Mandatory E-Verify:** Smith has included mandatory employment verification provisions in at least three bills since the early 1990s. [H. RES. 1026](#), a bill he co-sponsored, would make the voluntary federal electronic employment verification system — [E-verify](#) — mandatory.
- **Ending Birthright Citizenship:** Smith has been credited by his [supporters](#) with “lead[ing] the charge behind H.R. 1868, the [Birthright Citizenship Act of 2009](#).” In August, Smith [explained](#) “We do not need to amend the Constitution to end birthright citizenship.” “I think if Congress simply passes a law saying that the United States should do what every other industrialized nation in the world does...and that is, require at least one parent to be in the country legally, that we can do it by statute,” he [explained](#).
- **HALT Act:** There is also a [rumor](#) on right-wing websites that Smith is interested in introducing a bill called the “HALT Act” which is supposedly “designed to prevent President Obama and his administration from granting de facto amnesties” through his executive authority. Many view this as a move intended to block passage of bills such as the DREAM Act which Smith has called “a dual assault on law-abiding, taxpaying American citizens and legal immigrants.”

Smith has [declined](#) to comment on his plans if he becomes chairman, but if the [Pledge to America](#)—the Republicans’ legislative agenda unveiled in September—and Smith’s past are any indication, the new House leadership’s immigration focus will be on issues of border enforcement, immigration law enforcement and strengthening visa security.